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REMARKS

ON

Theology
Book 5.
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Dr. WELLS

HIS

LETTER

TO A

Dissenting Parishioner.

In a Second Letter to a Friend.

By James  *Peirce.*

L O N D O N,

Printed by J. Humfreys, for John Lawrence
at the Angel in the Poultry. 1706.

REMARKS

ON

Dr. WELLS

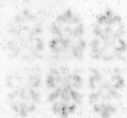
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WHEN I sent you my Remarks upon the Doctor's Letter to Mr. *Dowley*, I had not seen that to a dissenting Parishioner; but it has since come to my hands; and I find upon the Perusal of it, that many things in it have receiv'd an Answer in my former, and so will the less need to be consider'd again in this. There are several things in this Letter of the Doctor's which I shall not take notice of, as being of no moment in the present Controversy; his solemn Harangues, grave Admonitions, and insulting Triumphs, add nothing of weight to his Arguments; and therefore when *these* have receiv'd an Answer, every one will discern *the other* do no hurt to our Cause. I intend likewise to be sparing in my Animadversions on his Reproaches, and the damning Sentences which he passes upon us, it being evident, we are not to stand or fall by his Judgment.

The first thing we are concern'd to take notice of, is what the Doctor undertakes to prove; *That we are all under an indispensable Obligation to follow the Rules and Directions of such as are duly authoriz'd to govern that part of the Christian Church, which is within this Nation, and that in all things by them requir'd of us that are not sinful: To which purpose, he urges Heb. 13. 17. Obey them that have the Rule over you, and submit your selves, &c.* This, he says, is to be understood of Obedience, and Submission to spiritual Rulers; which I grant: But then he adds, *That from this Text it appears, (1.) That in the Catholick or Universal Church, and consequently in (every distinct part thereof, that is) every National Church, there are some whose Office it is to rule; and therefore, among other things, to give Rules and Directions concerning all Circumstances relating to the Church, that are left undetermin'd by Christ and his Apostles.*

I have already consider'd the Text from which the Doctor argues in this Place ; and,

1. I desire that it may be remember'd, (as it is there alledg'd) that our Obedience can be only due to things not sinfully commanded by Rulers.

2. I add, that the Doctor's Inference is not good, that because some are Rulers, therefore they have Power to determine all Circumstances relating to the Church, left undetermin'd by Christ and his Apostles ; For they are only Rulers under Christ, the supream Head and King of the Church ; and therefore their being Rulers, is very consistent with a much more restrain'd and limited Power, than what the Doctor assigns them.

Our Justices of the Peace are Rulers, and yet have not a Power of determining all things undetermin'd by the Parliament : They can't bind Men where the Parliament has not done it before.

3. There may be many Circumstances which Christ design'd should always be left undetermin'd ; and therefore the Doctor should produce that Commission whereby Christ has empower'd them to determine these things ; for I suppose no Man can doubt, but that he might set Rulers in his Church, tho he had such a Design.

4. That it do's not appear, that Christ has left to the Rulers of his Church, any Power of determining other Circumstances, than those that are in order to the Execution of his own Commands : They are authoriz'd, and requir'd to teach them to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them, *Mat.* 28. 20. but no more than I can find ; and therefore those Circumstances which must be determin'd, or his Commands can't be obey'd, they must determine. So the Circumstances of Time and Place must be determin'd, or the Command of Publick Worship can't be observ'd. And as to such Circumstances, there may be Reasons in different Times and Places, for different Determinations, which those on the spot will be best able to judge of. And so the Wisdom and Goodness of our great Law-giver is manifest, in his leaving these things undetermin'd. But this do's not in the least establish their Power to appoint such things as are no way necessary or useful, in order to our observing what he has commanded, such as the Cross in Baptism, &c.

5. In those things, in which (tho the Law of Christ has really left Men at Liberty) Christians may differ in their Apprehensions, Church-Rulers have not a Power to determine which side shall be taken. That this is a supposable Case, may appear by *Rom. 14.* And should all these things in dispute be really lawful, yet since many judge them unlawful, and they are not any way necessary or useful, Church-Rulers have no Power to impose them, for this plain Reason, that this agrees not with the very end of their Power, which is for Edification, and not for Destruction; *2 Cor. 10. 8.* Now, this Power can't be to Edification; for in such things where God has left us to our Liberty, we are not the better for doing 'em, nor the worse for not doing 'em; *1 Cor. 8. 8.* It is to Destruction; as it is prejudicial to the Soul of a Christian, if he obeys while he is not satisfy'd of the Lawfulness of the thing enjoin'd; or as it is prejudicial to the Unity and Peace of the Church, while it necessitates the doubting Christian to separate, that he may not wound his Conscience.

6. When the Doctor says, That from *Heb. 13. 17.* it appears, that in the *Catholick*, and consequently in (every particular part thereof, that is) every *National Church*, there are some whose Office it is to rule. I must own I am at a loss to understand him: That it appears from thence, that in all those particular Churches, to which the Apostle wrote, there were Rulers, I grant, and that there should be such in all other Churches of the like Nature, is acknowledg'd likewise: But as the Apostle speaks not of the *Catholick Church*, I am not able to discern the reason of his Consequence. One would think, that if the Text yields any Argument for the Doctor, it must be this; In all Particular Churches there are Rulers, and consequently there must be such in National Churches (and then if he has a mind to pleasure the Popish Usurpers, he may add) and consequently there must be such in the *Catholick or Universal Church*: The *Catholick Church* has no other governing Head but Christ; and he governs it, not by any Governour, or any Body or Assembly of Governours set over it as *Catholick*, but by Governours set over the several distinct Parts of which it is constituted.

The Question now comes to this ; Into what kind of Parts is it the Will of Christ that the Church Catholick should be divided ? Or what Notion do's the Scripture give us of those Churches which had Rulers set over them ? The Doctor says, that in every National Church there must be some whose Office it is to rule. But why should he not look upon himself concern'd to shew us the Institution of a National Church ? I must declare, I find nothing of this nature in the New Testament, where I meet with no other than these two sorts of Churches, the Catholick Church, and the Churches of one particular City or Place. The Christian Societies of a whole Country, are never spoken of as one Church, but as Churches, as the Churches in *Judea*, 1 Thes. 2. 14. The Churches of *Macedonia*, 2 Cor. 8. 1. The Churches of *Asia*, 1 Cor. 16. 19. The Churches of *Galatia*, 1 Cor. 16. 1. Gal. 1. 2. And there is not one Instance to the contrary in the New Testament ; so that it is not fair for the Doctor to argue, that because there ought to be Rulers in those Churches which Christ has instituted, and we are oblig'd to submit to them, therefore Men may, when they have devis'd a new Species and Kind of Churches, appoint Governours over them, and require us to submit to them. That every distinct Church in those several Countries, had a full and compleat Power of Government within it self, I can't think will be deny'd ; and this was a sacred Trust committed to them for their own Preservation, and other most valuable Purposes. And I humbly propose it to Consideration, whether it be reasonable to suppose, that they could of Right part with that Power they were originally intrusted with, and place it in the hands of others ? that is, Whether the Governours of the several Churches, for instance, of *Asia*, having receiv'd the Government from Christ over their respective Churches, could agree together to establish an higher Power over themselves ? Or could lawfully submit to any Body of Men that claim'd it ? If they had no right to this, I think the Commands of National Rulers will be of little moment ; for every Christian Church in a Nation, is to resume its own Right.

This Power of the Rulers of a National Church, is that which often recurs in the Doctor's Letter, and indeed is the main Foundation upon which he builds.

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And therefore if I should leave off here, I should fully have answer'd the Doctor, till he gives us proof of that which he now takes for granted, concerning the Right of a National Church.

But let us hear his other Argument.

You know that St. Paul has given this general Rule in reverence to Divine Worship, Let all things be done decently, and in order, 1 Cor. 14. 40. But no particular Rules relating to the several Circumstances of Decency and Order, are to be met with in the Scriptures: And therefore the Doctor argues, That either Christ was deficient in not leaving such Rules, or else he has provided for the same, by this Power lodg'd in Rulers.

To which I answer, That when the Doctor would take off the Objection from those Words, *Teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*; he tells us from the Context, that Christ speaks only against such Traditions or Commandments of Men, as did transgress the Commandments of God, and made the Commandments of God of none effect. How truly he alledges this, will be consider'd in its proper Place: We only crave leave to imitate the Doctor, and to give our Answer from the Context, and the Scope of the Apostle. Now, in the place alledg'd, he argues against those things which carry'd in them an Indecency and Disorder, that was not owing to their being particularly forbid by Church-Rulers (for indeed this Indecency and Disorder seems to have been wholly among the Church-Rulers themselves) but was obvious to all Men, according to the natural Sentiments they have of Decency and Order: And therefore the Apostle appeals here to their own Judgments *, and those of the Unlearned, * Compare and even of Unbelievers, ver. 23. If 1 Cor. 11. 13. therefore the whole Church be come together, and all speak with Tongues, and there come in those that are unlearn'd, or Unbelievers, will they not say that you are mad? The Practice therefore which he speaks against, was so indecent and disorderly, that it was fit for none but Mad-men, and so could not be seemly in a Christian Assembly: And when such things as these, which are contrary to Mens natural Notions of Decency and Order, are avoided, the Apostle's Precept will be

observ'd. But from hence to infer the Power of Church Rulers by their Commands, to create a Decency in those things that have none at all in themselves, is wide from the Purpose. The Apostle supposes the things decent, and therefore urges them ; and the Doctor argues from hence the Authority of Rulers to direct us when we are to kneel, stand, or Bow ; whether there be any Decency in these things, or no.

'Tis extravagant, to think there is any Decency in standing at the reading of the same part of the Scripture, when read as a Gospel ; and sitting, when read as a Lesson ; or that there is any Decency in bowing at the Name of Jesus, toward an Altar, or the East. And if there be nothing of a natural Decency in these things, the Doctor cannot argue from this Text the Power of Rulers to impose them.

Again by the same sort of Argument, 'twill follow, That the Rulers of the Church have full Power to make, and appoint all such Officers (even over and above those mention'd by Christ and his Apostles) as they shall judge convenient for the well governing of the Church, and consequently to make Arch-Bishops, Arch-Deacons, Chancellors, Officials, Apparitors, &c.

What has been already said, serves for a sufficient Answer to this. Christ has appointed Rulers in his Church ; he has given them a Power to take Care of the Execution of his Laws : And he has made it their Duty to use this Power, and they have no Right to abridge themselves of it, as they really do, when they subject themselves to such Officers as he has not appointed, or commit that Power to others, which, according to his Appointment, was at first peculiar to themselves : And if the Doctor's Notion be true, the Form of Church-Government must be the most mutable Creature in the World.

According to the Doctor's way of arguing, if National Churches may create a new sort of Officers (Arch-Bishops) why may not the Arch-Bishops of several Nations agree to make Patriarchs ? and all the Patriarchs make a Pope ? Or at least the Doctor bids fair for the setting up of an English National Pope, according to what some suspected to be the Design of a certain Prelate, who refus'd a Cardinal's Cape.

And

And what can be more absurd, than to dispute, whether Presbyters (Officers of Divine Appointment) have the Government of the Church committed to them, and yet make Chancellors (a Parcel of meer Lay-men) Judges in Spiritual Courts of the most important Concerns, as Excommunications, &c?

2. The Doctor says, *It appears from Heb. 13. 17. That all other Christians are bound in Conscience to obey and submit to the said Rulers of the Church.*

I answer in the Doctor's own Words, *That as far as the Power of the Ruler doth extend on the one hand, so far on the other side is to be extended the Obedience of those under Rule*; that is, A Christian is bound to obey those whom God has set over him, so long as they act according to their Commission; but when they go beyond that, they become Tyrannical, and he is at his Liberty.

But the Doctor argues, *That there is no Limitation annex'd, whereby the Obedience requir'd should be restrain'd to such Matters as are determin'd by Christ and his Apostles.*

I answer, There is no Limitation annex'd when we are requir'd to obey Magistrates, *Tit. 3. 1.* And yet this Nation is very sensible, that such may go beyond the Power that is committed to them, and that then Subjects are not bound to obey.

Or again, it is very possible that Civil Rulers may command one thing, and Church Rulers another; as, for ought I see, is actually the Case as to the whole Body of the Canons of 1640, and of many of those of 1603. Or again, the like Obedience is urg'd upon Children to their Parents, *Ephes. 6. 1.* and upon Servants to their Masters, *ver. 5.* And these must be suppos'd not to interfere with one another: And therefore 'tis plain, we must here distinguish the Nature of the several Powers; and in the particular Case before us, must judge what the Obedience is that we are to yield to the Rulers of the Church, by the Commission and Authority they have receiv'd from Christ; and what that is I have observ'd already. But farther, the Text it self do's contain a Limitation in the Reason that is given, *for they watch for your Souls*: And therefore so long only as they watch for the Good of my Soul, and in those things wherein they do

do so, I am to submit to them, and obey them; but when they enjoin things that can't possibly do my Soul any Good, as the Crosse in Baptism, bowing toward an Altar, &c. They herein watch for themselves, and the setting up of their own Authority, and watch not for my Soul, except to make a Prey of it; and therefore herein the Apostle do's not require me to obey them.

But (says the Doctor) *no Christian can be reasonably suppos'd to scruple giving Obedience to what is expressly commanded by Christ and his Apostles; and therefore if the Obedience requir'd, is to be understood to extend no farther than to what is expressly commanded in the Scriptures, then there seems to be no occasion left for the inspir'd Writer to give any such Precept.*

To which I might answer, that some things not determin'd, or expressly commanded by Christ, were yet necessary to be determin'd, in order to the obeying his express Commands; and in such things they were to obey their Rulers. But passing that, I would fain have the Doctor make good his Assertion; for I fear it will be found at last, that in all Ages of the Church, there have been many Christians (*i. e.* many who profess'd themselves such, and were in visible Communion with the Church, who scrupled giving Obedience to the express Laws of Christ, and (to use some of the Doctor's words) *The Inspir'd Writer foreseeing that in after-Ages, (and indeed finding it too true in his own) some might arise, who, not so much out of Humour, as out of Perverseness, and desperate Wickedness, might be Drunkards, Whoremongers, Liars, Cheats, &c. (tho these things were directly opposite to the express Laws of Christ) he urges them to be subject to their Rulers, for this Reason, because they in their publick and private Exhortations, and by the Discipline appointed by Christ, were to urge and inculcate the avoiding these things, and to press upon them the contrary Vertues.* I am sure, the Doctor's Representation will not fit any Age of the Church; no not that in the Times of the Apostles, as may be seen by the Church of Corinth, of whose Disorders we read: And by the *Asian Churches, Rev. 2, & 3.* And the *Hebrew Christians* (to whom this Epistle was written) were exceeding prone to depart from Christ, and his holy Religion, from the great Affection which they retain'd to Judaism: And hence he continually

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ports them to Stedfastness in the Christian Religion ;
 upon this very account urges them to regard their
 Rulers in this Chapter, ver. 7, 8. *Nay, that the Obedience*
Church-Rulers requir'd in the afore-said Text, is to be un-
stood principally and chiefly in reference to things deter-
min'd only by their Authority, may be farther argued from
Propriety of Speech. And this will appear from the Distin-
ction made use of by St. Paul, 1 Cor. 7. for ver. 10. Where
he delivers what was by our Saviour himself enjoin'd to
Marry'd Persons, having at first said, Unto the Marry'd I
command ; he presently recalls himself, as having spoken less
exactly, and subjoins, Yet not I, (that is, in strict Pro-
priety of Speech, not I) but the Lord. And in like manner,
ver. 12. he says, But to the rest speak I (that is more proper-
ly) not the Lord, viz. By any express Command or Deter-
mination in Scripture. Now, according to this Distinction,
to observe or do what is expressly commanded in Scripture, is
to obey God himself, and not (properly) the Rulers of the
Church ; and then only we can be said (properly) to obey
the Church Rulers themselves, when we observe or do some-
what commanded by them, tho it be not commanded in the
Scripture.

I do not much dislike the Doctor's Interpretation of
 the Text, when the Apostle says, *Yet not I, but the Lord* ;
 that he means, that Christ himself had by his own
 Word, while on Earth, decided the Case ; and that there-
 fore what he was speaking of, was rather to be look'd
 upon as the Command of Christ *immediately*, and not
mediately by his Apostles. But then when he says, *To*
the rest speak I, not the Lord ; the meaning only is, that
 Christ had said nothing of that Matter while on Earth.
 For is the Apostle to be understood, as tho he did not
 give this Command by Inspiration, or as tho this were
 not to be consider'd as *properly* the Command of Christ,
 for which purpose the Reader may consult Dr. *Whitby's*
Preface to his Annotations, who has excellently well
 clear'd this Matter. And what is now all our Doctor's
 Language to the purpose ? St. *Paul* distinguishes what
 Christ had said while on Earth, from what he himself
 wrote by the immediate Direction and Inspiration of his
 Spirit.

Does the Doctor think this will help him in his Ar-
 gument, to prove the Power of Church-Rulers, who have

no such Inspiration? Or would he perswade us, that to obey the Commands which Christ gave by the infallible Direction of his Spirit, is not properly to obey Christ? I will indeed own, that to obey Church Rulers, when they command what Christ do's no ways command, is not properly to obey Christ: And add farther, that till they can give us good Evidence of that Inspiration the Apostles had, I cannot look upon my self oblig'd by the Commands they are pleas'd to enact. It is certain where the Apostles had no Rule themselves, they pretended not to give any. The things enjoyn'd at the Council of *Jerusalem*, were necessary things, which it seem'd good to the Holy Ghost, and to the Apostles to lay upon Christians; *Acts 15. 28.* In other things they left Christians to their Liberty, *Rom. 14.* And if the Apostles themselves claim'd not a Power of determining such Matters, I cannot but question the Right of all Church Rulers who come after them.

I shall take notice of his other Consideration that follows here, when I come to consider the 8th Objection which he speaks to; and therefore now pass on his General Head, which is, as he tells us;

II. *To prove, That the Governours of that Part of the Christian Church, which is within this Kingdom, are (so far as concerns the Controversy between us and you) those who now a-days call Bishops.*

The Doctor is larger on this Head in his other Letter and having consider'd that already, I refer the Reader to my other Letter: I shall only add;

1. That the Doctor has here left out the Lower House of Convocation, who are all Presbyters; and yet they in each Province concur to the making of Canons; and therefore, one wou'd think, should be part of the Spiritual Legislature, or of the Government of the National Church. And he has left out the Prince, without whose Approbation their Canon signifies nothing. He has left out the Parliament, who have a Power to disannul any of their Canons, or to make what Alterations they please in the National Church. And indeed it is hard to say, who are the Governours of our National Church. For the Bishops can't in any respect be look'd upon as more than a part of the Spiritual Legislature; And as we pretend

pretend that Ministers should be under Christ, just such as they in their several Diocesses under the Convocation, bound by their Commands, and oblig'd to see to the execution of them, so far as the Civil Government will permit them.

2. As it is unreasonable for Men to alter the very species of Churches from the first Institution, so it is unreasonable to pretend, that Men come to have a Right to alter the Church in any other way, than what Christ has appointed; and I fear it will be hard to find where he has intrusted the Civil Magistrate with the Power to change the Governours of his Church.

The Doctor then tells his Parishioner, *that he has somewhat experienc'd, that after the greatest Evidence that can be desir'd from Antiquity in this Case, there is at last an Evasion ready to be made use of by him, that he is not Scholar enough to enter into the Merits of the Controversy.*

But in my Apprehension, no great matter of Scholarship is requisite in this Case. Every Christian's Religion should be in his Bible; and he need not much regard those that argue from any other kind of Testimony. Now I don't think it so hard a matter for Men to understand, whether according to the Scripture there were Bishops appointed over Presbyters. And when I consider that this Obedience to Bishops is that which the Doctor requires under pain of Damnation, and would persuade us that the believing every thing Reveal'd in the Scriptures, and obeying all the Commands of Christ, will not save a Man, who do's not obey the Bishops, I cannot but think, that the fullest and clearest Evidence is to be given us from the Scriptures, that this is our Duty, and that the necessity of such Obedience should be shewn as clearly and positively express'd, as is the Necessity of Faith and Holiness. But the Doctor himself sufficiently declares, that this is not the State of the Case; when he tells us, *that the Order of Apostles was distinct from the Order of Presbyters, and the same with what we now call the Order of Bishops, is fairly to be gather'd from the New Testament itself, and is evident beyond all Contradiction from the Writings of the Primitive Christians.* Now this should be evident beyond all Contradiction, from the New Testament itself, if it were an Article of Faith necessary to be believed in order to Salvation. I have already sufficiently

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answer'd what he here asserts, and to his *Ignatius*, I oppose *Clemens*, and *Polycarp*, as ancient Witnesses, who give a plain Testimony of the two-fold Order; and add that we oppose not the Episcopacy mention'd by *Ignatius* himself.

But let us see how the Doctor answers in this Case. He asks him, *What is the Consequence of this? Is it that you ought, in all such Cases too difficult for your self to determine, to betake your self to him, who is appointed by God to be your immediate Guide in all Religious Matters, that is, to your Parish-Minister? And that the Parish-Ministers are thus appointed by God, he labours to prove by this Reason, because they are appointed by the Bishops, the Governours of the National Church.*

Now in answer to this, 1. I desire the Reader to observe what he means by betaking himself to his Parish-Minister, that is, that he is not only to consult him, but to submit his own Judgment to his, as I think is plainly the Doctor's Scheme in many Places. Now this is what the Papists would fain urge People to, but is a Principle very contrary to the main Foundation of Protestants, and the Rule of the Apostle, *Prove all things*. And the Papists are willing to put the matter on the same Foot, of Cases too difficult for the Laity. But we deny, that anything necessary to Salvation is too hard and difficult for such to determine.

2. I deny for many Reasons already mention'd, that the Bishops have the Power pretended.

3. The Appointment of a Bishop is only a matter of Form, he having no Right to refuse the Presentation of a Patron, who can have no Right, by the Laws of Christ, to chuse a Guide for the Souls of the whole Parish.

4. The Appointment of a Bishop is often not necessary, as in many places, which are exempted from Episcopal Jurisdiction.

Whence you may learn, that in respect to the Church, 'tis no more left to your own Will or Choice, whom you will look upon as your true Pastor or Minister, than in respect to the State 'tis left to your own Will or Choice, whom you'll look upon as your Constable, &c. but as he that is duly appointed by the Civil Magistrate to be the Constable of your Parish, is to be acknowledg'd as your Constable; so he that is duly appointed by the proper Spiritual Magistrate to be the Minister

your Parish, is to be acknowledg'd on all accounts as your Minister or Pastor, and as such is to be your Guide in spiritual Matters.

Not to repeat what is said before, I answer, that the Doctor's Parallel will not be much amiss when rightly put, that is thus ; As he that is chosen by the Parish, according to the fixed Laws of the Land, to be Constable, to be look'd upon as Constable of the Parish ; so he that is chosen by the Church, according to the Laws of Christ, to be the Minister of it, is to be look'd upon as the true Minister of the Church.

As to what follows, it is only silly wheedling (not unusual in the Doctor's way of writing) that will suit any Intimate, Protestant or Popish. The Case is not so difficult, but that any ordinary Understanding, upon impartial Consideration, may judge of it. I will be so free as to say, that the Presentation of a Patron, or the Institution and Induction of a Bishop, have not as yet been prov'd to be full Evidences of a Divine Appointment of a Man to be the Minister of a Parish. And he that is of my mind, and is for choosing another to be the Guide of his Soul, acts, for ought I can see, very warrantably. And tho the Errors of a Minister will not justify the Errors of the People, and the Doctor is mistaken, when he says the Error is not *properly* the Peoples, but the Ministers, when he leads them into it, for it is *properly* the Error of both, because both are in the wrong, and both ought to search the Scriptures, and the People are not to rely upon any Minister's Authority for the truth of what he says ; yet I shall always entertain such Notions of God's Mercy, as to think he will pardon the involuntary Errors of all sincere and humble Souls, who search the Scriptures for Information, and act according to the best Light they can get from thence, in Matters that relate to their spiritual Benefit ; and by this Rule I judge indifferently of Church-men and Dissenters.

III. His third General Head is, *That nothing sinful is requir'd of you by the Bishops, and therefore that there can be no warrantable Excuse or Argument for your Refusing to observe the Rules of the Church.*

I might pass over this Head, till the Doctor has better establish'd the Right of our Diocesan Bishops, to be Governours

vernours of all the Churches in this Nation, and till he has prov'd, that all Governours have a Power to enjoy every thing not sinful, both which I have before consider'd.

The Doctor says, they require nothing *that is against any Precept in the whole Scripture.* Of this I have had, and shall yet have occasion to speak elsewhere.

The Doctor is pleas'd to instance in some things which he says are not sinful; as,

The wearing the Surplice. I will own, that a Garb in itself is an indifferent thing, and that the wearing a Surplice in the Worship of God, absolutely speaking, is not in my Apprehension sinful. But this being one of the Ceremonies of the Church, it is to be consider'd for what use it is retain'd and enjoin'd. Now that we learn from the Preface to the Book of Common-Prayer, which tells us, that *other (Ceremonies) there be, which altho they have been devis'd by Man, yet it is thought good to reserve them still, as well for a decent Order in the Church (for the which they were first devis'd) as because they pertain to Edification;* and afterwards they speak of these Ceremonies *as serving to decent Order and Godly Discipline, and as to stir up the dull Mind of Man to the Remembrance of his Duty to God; by some notable and special Signification where by he might be edify'd.* Now I cannot see how this Use of this Ceremony can be allow'd. If it were only a matter of Decency, I doubt not but a Man might lawfully use it who was satisfy'd of the Decency of it, tho I confess I can't see any such thing in it. But when it is carried farther than this, and is to be look'd upon as Edifying the Soul, this places it at a wide distance from the indifferent things spoken of by the Apostle, which on either side render'd not a Person either better or worse. Nay, this so exactly agrees with the Ceremony urg'd by the Pharisees, and condemn'd by Christ, that I can't think how it can be justify'd. For I would fain know whether washing Hands was not as proper to put a Person in mind of inward Purity as the Surplice?

Bowing at the Name of Jesus, or towards the Altar. I know there are some in the Communion of the Church of England, who do not look upon themselves oblig'd to these. As to the first, it is enjoin'd by the Canons of 1603. as are many other things, which do not now ob-

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light, and are not observ'd. The greatest Objection I have against this, is, that I can see no manner of Reason why I should do it, as 'tis enjoyn'd. The Service God requires of me, and which I am therefore bound to render to him, is a reasonable Service, and how I can pretend to serve God acceptably, with a Service of which I can give no Reason at all, I am yet to seek. And what Reason can there be giv'n, why I should bow at the Name Jesus, and not at that of Saviour (which is the very same) or at that of *Emanuel, Lord, God, Jehovah, &c.*

But then as to his other Instance, *Bowing towards the Altar*; I own this would offend me much more; but I do not think it is enjoyn'd by the Church; it is left to every one's Liberty by the Canons of 1640. And I cannot but declare, that this alone, if enjoyn'd, would cause me to separate from any Communion whatever. I know very well, the Jews bow'd toward the Cloud, and the Temple, &c. but the reason of this, was God's Presence in those visible Symbols and Tokens hereof. And, so far as I can apprehend, had not God been so present, they would have been guilty of Idolatry in such Worship towards those things. I think

Bp. *Stillington* has well shewn, that the Israelites were guilty of Idolatry, in worshipping the Golden Calf in the Wilderness, and the Calves in *Dan* and *Bethel*, altho they only look'd upon these as Symbols of the Divine Presence, and design'd to worship the True God, and not the Calves themselves. *See Discourse concerning Idolatry, &c. p. 81. & seq.*

It ought therefore to be evidenc'd, that there is the special Presence of God continually at the Altar, or that the Altar is a Symbol thereof; or else I can't see how such an Action, as bowing towards an Altar, can be vindicated. To say that this is, in Conformity to the Primitive Church, signifies nothing; for the Question then returns, Whether the Primitive Church acted according to the Scriptures? Bishop *Usher* says, "Altho the gross Idolatry of *Po-* Body of Divin. P. 232.

perly be taken away from among us, yet the Corruption cleaveth still to the Hearts of many; as may be seen in them that make Courtesies to the Chancel, where the High Altar stood.

Kneeling particularly at the Sacrament : I do not deny the Lawfulness of this Posture to him who is so persuaded in his own Mind ; and yet I can see no reason to doubt of the Sincerity of many, who do not believe it to be lawful : Nor can I think such an Opinion is a sufficient Reason to exclude a Person from Christian Communion ; and therefore do deny the Power of Rulers to impose it.

The Cross in Baptism. This is us'd as a Sign or Pledge of the Merits of Christ. 'Tis enough that the Power to impose it is not made out ; and therefore I shall not farther alledge what convinces me of the Unlawfulness of it in it self.

Of Set Forms of Prayer : I have spoken largely in my other Letter, and so pass them over here.

IV. Next the Doctor proceeds to answer our Objections.

1. The first Objection is taken from *Mat. 15. 9.* *But in vain do they worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.* Now this Text (says he) is generally urg'd by your Writers, against observing the Rules and Orders of our Church, as being the Commandments of Men, (or in the common Language) Humane Ordinances. How we argue from this Text, may be seen in my other Letter ; and I think the Doctor has said very little in this Place to take off the Force of the Objection.

pag. 14. But (says he) with how little Reason this Text is wrested by your Party, against the Rules of our Church, will quickly appear : For if you consult the former part of the Chapter, you will find, that our Saviour is therein speaking only against such Traditions or Commandments of Men, as did transgress the Commandments of God, ver. 3. and make the Commandments of God of none Effect, ver. 6.

The Case is plainly this ; The Scribes and Pharisees blame Christ's Disciples for transgressing the Tradition of the Elders, by eating with unwashen Hands. There are two Parts of our Lord's Answer to this Accusation. (1.) The Accusation is retorted, and a much greater Charge is brought by him against them, for transgressing God's Commandments by their Traditions ; and their heinous Wickedness, and notorious Hypocrisy, was evidenc'd by their Concern about such a trifling Tradition, while

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while they so directly oppos'd the Commandment of God, and render'd it of none Effect. What this Command of God which is meant, was, may be seen by the Words of the Evangelist; *But he answer'd, and said to them, Why do you also transgress the Commandment of God by your Tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy Father and thy Mother; and he that curseth Father or Mother, let him die the Death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his Father, or Mother, 'tis a Gift by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me, and honour not his Father, or his Mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the Commandment of God of none Effect through your Tradition.* (2.) The other Part of our Lord's Answer, is a proper Vindication of his Disciples; in which, he tells the *Pharisees*, that those Rules they gave about washing Hands, &c. and upon which they so much insisted, were not pleasing to God, and so were not binding: And to this part of his Answer belong those Words; *But in vain do they worship, &c.* and this is evident, by comparing *Matthew* and *Mark*, who both of them distinguish these two Parts of our Lord's Answer, which being so distinct and different, they do not observe the same Order in recording them. But *St. Mark* has set down this latter first, which is set down last by *St. Matthew*; and therefore I desire the Reader to observe how the Words run in *Mark*, immediately upon the Charge, *Mark 7. 6. He answer'd and said unto them, Well hath Esaias prophesied of you, Hypocrites, as it is written, This People honoureth me with their Lips, but their Heart is far from me, howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men.* Now here is no mention made of their rendering the 5th Commandment of none Effect, through their Traditions, that follows after; and therefore it is idle to think, that our Lord spoke only of such Traditions as were directly opposite to express Commands. The next Words shew, what sort of Commandments of Men our Lord speaks against; *For laying aside the Commandment of God, ye hold the Tradition of Men, as the washing of Pots and Cups, &c.* So that if the Doctor would really say any thing to the Purpose, he should set us down some express Command of God in the Scripture, which was contradicted by their Tradition, concerning the washing of Hands, Pots, Cups, &c.

Again, Christ rebukes the Jews for teaching such their Traditions for Doctrines; that is, making them of equal Obligation and Necessity with the Commandments of God.

I am very sensible what stress the Jews laid upon their own Traditions; but the Question is now only, Whether that Matter be intended in the Text? and whether the Doctor has given us a good Gloss upon those Words, *Teaching for Doctrines*? But unless his word may pass for a clear Proof, I can see no reason for this Interpretation. In my Apprehension, there is very good Sense in our Lord's Discourse, if it be thus understood; "The Doctrines, the Rules, and Directions, which you give for the worshiping and honouring God, are the meer Commandments of Men; they are such things as God has no where prescrib'd, and which therefore do not please him, but are vain and unprofitable. And let the Reader consider, whether this do's not exactly agree with the Sense of the Prophet, from whom our Lord cites this Passage, *Isa. 29. 13. And your Fear towards me, is taught by the Precept of Men.* So that if the Doctor thinks God is serv'd and honour'd by these humane Ordinances in dispute, I can't see but that (however angry and uncharitable he is towards the Dissenters) he is in perfect Charity, and at a full Agreement with the judicious and learn'd *Scribes and Pharisees.*

pag. 15. The Doctor gives us a good hint of an Objection; *Viz. If these Things are not of equal Obligation and Necessity with the Commands of God, Why are they so much insisted upon, and why are they not alter'd, and taken away, that so the Dissenters may join Communion with us?* The Doctor answers, *That the Rulers of our Church are spiritual Fathers, and the Dissenters are so many untoward Children, that refuse due Obedience, without any good Ground.* And therefore he thinks, the Children (and not the Fathers) should comply. In answer to which learned Comparison, I say, there may be untoward Fathers, as well as Children. And if Children are arriv'd to the full Use of their own Understanding, (the want of which, is the great Reason why they are to be guided by that of their Parents, during their Minority) they are oblig'd to consider of the Reason and Justice of the Commands of a Parent: And when they see he goes beyond his Power in commanding, and question the Lawfulness

fulness of the thing commanded, they are not to obey. And to use the Doctor's Comparison; If a Father enjoys a thing, which he owns to be needless, and the Child professes, that he judges it sinful, and therefore desires to be left to his Liberty, he would be an untoward Father with a witness, in the Judgment of all the World, who nevertheless persisted in commanding it.

But the Doctor tells us, *This is a meer Sham or Pretence: For, (says he) I desire to know what Dissemers will be gain'd to the Church by this method alone? We must take away, not only Ceremonies, but also the Sacraments, before the Quaker will joyn with us. — Infant Baptism, before the Anabaptist will joyn with us. — Your whole Order of Bishops, before the Presbyterian and Independents will joyn with us.*

As to any Infringations of Christ, they are not to be taken away: And therefore no body expects the Quakers should joyn with the Church of England, or any other set of Christians, while they continue Quakers. Nor is Infant Baptism to be taken away to gain the Anabaptists: Tho I own their Opinion alone would not hinder me from holding Communion with them; But as to the other two, I can't think their joining is impossible. If Churches were reduc'd to their Primitive Size, and Subscriptions in dubious Matters were not requir'd, and pretended indifferent Matters were left indifferent, and Presbyters were allowed their due share in the Government of the Church, our Difference wou'd not long remain any thing near so wide as it is at present. I wonder whether the Doctor thinks King Charles the 2d's Declaration took away the whole Order of Bishops? Or whether he do's not know that the Presbyterians were thankful for it? If the thing it self be so Impracticable, why did the Bishops declare it to King James the 2d, that they were ready to come to a Temper with Reference to the Dissenters? Or why did the Churchmen promise this to the Dissenters in the time of their Distress? Or why did so many famous Church-men draw up Alterations for this end in the Jerusalem Chamber? Upon this I can't but take notice of what Mr. Calamy says, That "such Amendments *Abridgment,*
" as those were, with such an allowance in the p. 655.
" Point of Orders for Ordination by Presby-
" ters, as is made 13 Eliz. Cap. 12. would in all probability
" have brought in two thirds of the Dissenters in England.

pag. 17.

Obj. 2. Is from *Coloss. 2. 18, & 23.* from whence you are wont to infer, that 'tis unlawful to comply with the Rites and Ceremonies of our Church, because they are so many Acts or Circumstances of Will-worship.

The Dissenters do indeed think, that the Will of God is the rule of Worship; and that such Worship as is not according to the Declaration he has given us of his Will, may well be call'd *Will-worship*, and is not pleasing to God. And they own they can't find any thing in the Scriptures to satisfy them, that God requires us to Worship him with such Ceremonies as Bowing at the Name of Jesus toward an Altar; or with the Cross in Baptism, and the like. And this their Opinion is not only grounded on the word *Will-worship*, but on other Texts of Scripture, as has been shewn already. It is true, they imagine, they have a very good Argument from this Text, and I verily think the Doctor has said but little in answer to it. He cites two Verses as the ground of the Objection, and takes notice only of one, and that not the Chief, where the word *Will-worship* is. He says, that *the voluntary Humility or Worshipping there spoken against, is that which was paid by some of the ancient Hereticks to Angels, as is plain from the express words of the Text, Let no man beguile you of your Reward in a voluntary Humility, and worshipping of Angels.*

I suppose by these *Ancient Hereticks*, the Doctor means the Gnosticks: But I hardly believe it can be made appear, that the Apostle has any regard to them here. I can't but think he refers rather to some corrupt Doctrines of the Jews, or Jewish Christians; to which purpose I only desire the Context may be observ'd, both which goes before, and which follows after. I am sure

* *Vide Epist. ad Algasiam,* St. *Jerom* is of this mind. * I can't certainly say, what is then meant by the *θεουσκεία τῶν ἀγγέλων*, the *Worship or Religion of Angels*; but if the Angels are here spoken of,

not as the Objects, but as the Authors of the Worship, † *Tertullian's* Interpretation will not be amiss, when he says, that the Apostle here speaks against those; "Who

" from Angelical Visions pretended they must abstain
" from Meats. With whom also agrees a Commentator, to be met with among *St. Jerom's* Works. Perhaps this
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may well agree with those Stories that Dr. Lightfoot * speaks of, as frequent in the Jewish * Vol. 2. p. 129. Writings about their *Barb, Kol*, and the Appearance of *Elias* to their Wife-men; and it may be from some such kind of Opinion, that the Pharisees chuse to express themselves so, *Acts 23. 9. But if a Spirit or an Angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.* I determine nothing, but refer it *Comp. Gal. 1. 8.* to the Consideration of better Judgments: Only I observe, if this be the true sense of the Text, it bears a little hard upon *Socrates's* Story of the Original of Cathedral Worship, who tells us, that it arose from *Ignatius*, seeing a Vision of Angels singing Hymns to God in that alternate manner; with whom agrees *Nicephorus Callistus.* * Nor do's it much favour those, who alledge *Constantine's* Vision of the Cross, in defence * *Lib. 13. cap. 8.* of the Cross in Baptism. But let the Doctor be allow'd to have giv'n us a true Interpretation of the 18th Verse, and let us see whether in the other Verse which he cites in the Objection, but omits in the Answer, there be nothing that deserv'd his Notice. I shall set down the Text at large, *ver. 20, &c. Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the World, why, as though living in the World, are ye subject to Ordinances (Touch not, tast not, handle not, which all are to perish in the using) after the Doctrines and Commandments of Men? Which things have indeed a shew of Wisdom in Will-worship and Humility, and neglecting of the body, not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh.* In which words the Apostle argues, that Christians should not be subject to such Rules and Precepts as those, *Touch not, Tast not, Handle not;* which were certainly things indifferent in themselves. These Rules he calls Ordinances, after the Commandments and Doctrines of Men; where we have the two words which are us'd, *Matt. 15. 9.* and indeed Christ's Defence of his Disciples there, is turn'd into a Prohibition (or what is equivalent) here. And as Christ shews, that his Disciples were not bound by the Laws of Men, urg'd by the Scribes and Pharisees, so St. Paul shews, that Christians should not obey any such Laws of Men. And this he argues from their being deliver'd from the Ceremonial Yoke by Christ: The Rudiments of the

World are certainly the Jewish Ceremonies; compare Gal. 4. 3, 9. & Heb. 9. 1. And if the Ceremonies, whose Original was of God, are spoken of with Contempt here and else-where, when God no longer requir'd the use of them; I can't think that those, whose Original is purely of Men, are like to be pleasing to him. Nor can I apprehend, that he who has taken away one Ceremonial Yoke, has Authoriz'd uninspir'd Men to lay another upon the Necks of his Disciples. Again, the Apostle says these things have a *shew of Wisdom in Will-worship*. I must own, the Interpreters differ about the word Will-worship, whether it is to be taken in a good or a bad sense. Some think 'tis to be understood in a good Sense, and that Will-worship signifies the forwardness and freeness of their Service; and so they think by a shew of this, and of Humility, they endeavour'd to set off themselves, and to gain Proselytes. Others think it is to be taken in a bad Sense, and that such Worship as is not of Divine Institution, is condemn'd under this name. And by the way, the chief Objection against this Interpretation, *viz.* That it is joyn'd with Humility, is easily remov'd, if St. Jerom's Interpretation of Humility, in a bad Sense, be allow'd, with whom Tertullian seems to agree, in the places mention'd before. But I need not concern myself to determine in which Sense 'tis to be understood; for in either of them it must have a reference to those Humane Ordinances spoken of before; and if it be understood in a bad Sense, 'tis then Plain, that the Apostle condemns those Humane Ordinances under the name of Will-worship: But if it be taken in a good Sense, he then must be suppos'd to reckon these things to have only a plausible shew of some-what Good, while they were really Bad: And then, tho' the word Will-worship will not support the Objection, yet the Scope of the Apostle and his Argument will sufficiently do it.

The Doctor pretends, That *here is no danger of being guilty of Will-worship, because we act out of bounden Duty to our Rulers, and not of our own Will and Choice*. But this is nothing to the purpose, because the Apostle forbids a Subjection to such Ordinances.

I shall only subjoin, that we are not the only Persons who object against Will-worship. Bp. Usher tells us, that in the Second Commandment is forbidden "Every Form of Worship, tho' of the True God (*Deut. 12. 31.*) contrary

Body of Divinity, p. 222.

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(*Coloss.* 2. 23.) † All Will-worship, where- † P. 228.
by we make any thing a part of God's Service, which he hath not commanded, *Col.* 2. 23. For how great a shew soever it have, yet in that it leaneth to Man's Wisdom, 'tis unlawful. In Particular, — To devise any other Ministry than that which God hath Ordain'd, to place Religion in Meat and Drink, *Apparel, Time, Place, or any other indifferent Thing.*

His 3d and 4th Objections are consider'd in my former Letter.

His 5th Objection against Bishops being call'd Lords Bishops, is what for ought I can find Dissenters rarely alledge, and perhaps never ground it upon the Text cited by the Doctor, *1 Pet.* 5. 3. or at least that is not the principal Text they insist on in that Matter.

The Question is, whether those Titles of Honour, and that Interest the Bishops have in Civil Affairs, do's so well suit with their Character and Work, as to deserve to be made inseparable from it. 'Tis very possible, that many Dissenters have thought they do not, as well as many others, and the Doctor is not Ignorant, that there are several Ancient Ecclesiastical Canons that favour this Opinion: But I will own to him, that whoever grounds an Objection against the Bishops Titles upon this Text, do's not argue very strongly; it being thus in the *Greek, not Lording or Domineering* over God's Heritage, that is, not pretending to Rule in an Arbitrary way, and setting up their own Will for a Law, and expecting that People should yield a blind Obedience to all their Decrees, and then the Doctor will do well to consider whether his Arguments do not, in a great measure, oppose the Prohibition of the Apostle.

6. I have consider'd the Business of his 6th Objection in my former Letter.

Objection the 7th; *Proceed we next to the Text urg'd by you for Liberty of Conscience in Religious Matters, to wit, Gal.* 5. 1. *Stand fast therefore in the Liberty wherewith Christ has made us free?*

Liberty of Conscience (in the common use of that Expression) is hardly argued by any one from that Text. Liberty of Conscience, as it signifies Liberty for a Man to follow the Dictates and Directions of his Conscience in the
Worship

Worship of God, is not meant by the Liberty there spoken of. This Liberty is founded upon the Law of Nature, and is one of the unalienable Rights of every Good Subject, which no Government can justly deprive him of: But if by Liberty of Conscience, the Doctor means only that the Conscience is freed from some Law, (*viz.* the Ceremonial) by which it was oblig'd before; so we confess we do argue from this Text: And we own, this Liberty do's not signify a Freedom to do what we will in Religious Matters; We own our selves under Law to Christ: We allow the Doctor that it relates to the Yoke of the Levitical Law, but then our not being oblig'd by the Levitical Ceremonial Law, is reckon'd by the Apostle a Liberty, and a Privilege, tho' that Law was of God's own making; and I hope then it will be no great Instance of our Liberty, to come under another Ceremonial Yoke of Man's making. If these Old Religious Ceremonies, which God himself Instituted, are stiled a Yoke of Bondage, and beggarly Elements, I confess, I can't have very Honourable Thoughts of those new ones which are of an infinitely less honourable Extract.

As to the other Text brought in here by the Doctor, *1 Thes. 5. 21. Prove all things. I know none that think it gives leave to try and experiment all things.* We say, it requires that Christians should examine the things they hear, and search by the Scriptures, whether they be true or no; and not act by an implicit Faith in any one who pretends to be their Guide: And we say farther, that the last part of the Verse, *hold fast that which is good*; obliges them not to entertain his Errors, but only those Truths which he delivers; of which I shall say more under the next Head.

Obj. 8th, Rom. 14. 23. Whatsoever is not of Faith, is sin: Whence (says the Doctor) you may perhaps Argue, that it being not of Faith in you, that is, it being contrary to your Perswasion or Judgment, to join Communion with us; It would therefore be a sin in you to do it, and consequently for that Reason (if for no other) you ought to abstain from our Communion. Now I desire you, Neighbour, to consider, that if this Text is so to be understood, as you would have it, viz. That any Man's private Perswasion (how groundless soever) of a things being sinful, do's entirely excuse him from doing the thing; then by this Text a Papist, nay a Jew, nay a very Heathen, may justifie his manner of Worship, as well as you justifie yours by the Separation.

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I wonder how the Doctor could fasten such a Sense as this upon the Dissenters : There are none of them who understand this Text as he says. We own that Conscience is self under Law, and that an erroneous Conscience, when it puts a Man upon omitting a Duty as no Duty, is far from latirely justifying him : He sins in not doing what God has commanded, and in not informing his Conscience better ; but yet should he perform a Duty, his Conscience (through mistake) telling him it is a Sin, he would sin too. And it is not peculiar to the Dissenters to hold that Conscience is every Man's immediate Guide, which he is always, and in all things to follow. What that dictates to be his Duty, he is to do, and what that dictates to be Sin, he is not to do. And as the Dissenters profess their Perswasion and Judgment in these things is wholly grounded upon the Holy Scriptures, the Doctor might have omitted this Objection ; for when he can convince them, that this Perswasion is groundless, he will find they will make no such use of the Text. In the mean time, (for I think his Arguments do not abound with Evidence and Strength) while the Perswasion lasts, they can't but look upon themselves bound, by this Text, to follow it. And who is there that doubts whether a Papist, &c. do's Sin, that changes his Religion, while his Erroneous Conscience tells him he should not. The Doctor indeed says, that *these words were spoken with Reference to such Particulars, as were not determin'd either by the Scriptures or the Governours of the Church, but were left to every one's Private Determination.* But this is a mistake, for St. Paul speaks of the eating those things which some esteem'd (tho' without sufficient Reason) unclean and unlawful to be Eaten ; and this Particular was determin'd, as he Declares, ver. 14. *I know and am perswaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of it self.* What fuller Determination would the Doctor have ? And yet he declares, that an Erroneous Conscience binds in the next words ; *But to him that esteems any thing unclean, to him it is unclean.* Some things are Lawful, and not Necessary ; in doing or not doing these a Man sins not, if he follows the Directions of his Conscience, and observes the Rules of Charity : There are other things that are both Lawful and Necessary ; and here, if a Man's Conscience Mis-informs him, he sins either way ; by not doing them, because he obeys not the written-Law of God ; by doing them,

them, because he follows not the Directions of that which God has appointed to be his immediate Guide. And when the Doctor says, *we ought to submit, and give Preference to the lawful Authority of the Church, before our own private Perswasions*; he is greatly mistaken: I am never to do so in Matters of Sin and Duty; but am always to follow my own Perswasion; and if I mistake, it is not their Authority, but their Arguments and Reason must make me submit; and to urge Men, as the Doctor does, has, in my Apprehension, no other tendency than to make them condemn Conscience, (the Regard to which should always be sacred and inviolable) and take the ready way to contract the most deplorable Hardness of Heart.

And now I shall look back upon the Doctor's Glides upon those words, *Heb. 13. 17. Submit your selves.* He

Pag. 9. *says, it is the same, as if the Holy Penmen had said thus, The it may sometimes happen, that the Rulers of the Church may enjoin such things, as some Members of the Church may not like in their own Opinions, yet it is the Duty of all such Members of the Church, to submit their Judgments to the Judgments of their Rulers, and to comply with their injunctions, by an actual and punctual Obedience.*

I suppose by these Words, *May not like in their own Opinions*, he means, that they judge them to be sinful, for else it do's not reach our Case; and then, I say, this is most pernicious Doctrine. There is nothing more dangerous, than for Persons to enslave their Judgments and Opinions to the Dictates of any un-inspir'd Persons, whoever they be. Nay, let us put the Case a little lower, that a Person is doubtful about the thing enjoined, that tho he is not fully convinc'd that 'tis a Sin, yet upon the account of many plausible Reasons and Objections, he is not fully satisfied of the Lawfulness of it, will the Doctor vouch for him, that he must then obey his Rulers, and say, that that Text, *What is not of Faith, is Sin*, is nothing to the purpose? Certainly, in this Case, a Man is to suspend his Obedience to it. Or again, suppose the Rulers of the Church enjoin any thing (in itself really) indifferent, of which yet a Person questions the Lawfulness, while, at the same time, he is fully satisfy'd, that the Power of Church-Rulers do's not extend

the imposing such things, is it not clear, that in this case he is not to comply? The Doctor says, *such a Submission is absolutely necessary to preserve the Churches Peace.* And that I own to be true, just as an absolute Submission

all the lawless Commands of a Tyrant, is absolutely necessary to preserve the Peace of a Kingdom. Without such Submission, there can be no Peace in the Church, where the Rulers will assume such a Power; but when they keep within bounds, and only teach Men to observe what Christ has commanded, the Peace of the Church will not need such a Support.

Next the Doctor proceeds to our Objections that are not taken from Scripture.

Object. 9. You say then, that the Act of Toleration p. 29.
permits you to separate from our Communion, and therefore you may lawfully do it. The Doctor answers, *That is not in the Power of an Act of Parliament, to make that be no Sin, which God has made sinful.* And this I grant, but deny that God has made our Separation sinful: And the Doctor refers to his Papers for a Proof, I refer to mine for an Answer. God has never made it sinful for every Church to choose its own Officers, and to order his Worship in the best way they can, according to the Rules of his Word. Nor has the Parliament made it sinful for us to do so, that is, it is now against no Command of either. 'Tis true, in the late Times of Persecution, there were Acts of Parliament which did forbid us to worship God according as we judg'd we ought; and the great Argument then urg'd, was Obedience to the Civil Magistrate; and then his Power in all things, not forbidden in Scripture, was cry'd up, and Submission to it press'd, under pain, not only of Fines, and Imprisonments, &c. but of Damnation. Blessed be God, this Argument from an Act of Parliament (with the many forcible ways of urging it upon us) is now at an End; and we do not hear much of it, and especially from the Doctor, who presses the same Obedience to Church-Rulers. Now when we alledge the Act of Toleration, 'tis upon two Accounts.

1. In answer to any Arguments that are fetch'd from such Acts; and to shew, that the Laws of Magistrates can't now (as formerly) be pretended.

2. We especially urge it upon this Account, because the National Church is perfectly a Creature of the State which owes it Being to Acts of Parliament, and therefore we can't see but the same Power that form'd it, may alter it; and the same Power that was suppos'd to lay an Obligation upon us, is able to take it off. I would know whose Institution a National Church is owing to, and whether there could be any such thing without an Act of Parliament? It is the Parliament that obliges Persons, in such or such a District, to submit to the Bishop of any City in it. It is this that makes, divides or unites Parishes; and therefore I take it for certain that if any Obligation lies upon me to resort to the Parish-Church, or to join with those that are for a National Conformity in Ceremonies, it must be deduc'd ultimately from an Act of Parliament; and by Consequence if they have a Power to oblige me to resort to such a Place, or sort of Worship, as I was not bound to before, they have a Power to release me from that Obligation also. Now this is actually the Case, for the Act of Toleration has vacated those former Laws which commanded me to fall in with the National Church, and has left me to my Liberty of worshiping God in any way that I like better; and of choosing a Pastor for myself; and tho' the Doctor thinks it only frees from Civil Penalties, others think, that so far as the Sanctions of Human Laws cease, so far those Laws themselves do cease also; so that there is now no Act of Parliament that requires any Dissenter to conform to the Church of England.

pag. 30. *Object. 10. Our manner of Divine Worship is not so pure as that observ'd in your Dissenting Conventicles.* It was thus the Heathens stil'd the Assemblies of the Primitive Christians, *Conventicula*: And if the Doctor thinks he follows a good Example, we are not unwilling to undergo the like Reproaches with those noble Persons, upon the Account of our Regard to the Institutions of our Lord; and if he takes Pleasure herein, and in the Name he would give us of fanatical Papists, we envy him not his Pleasure, and shall not retaliate. Our Religion teaches us to count our selves happy in these things, and to esteem them our Honour.

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The Doctor says, *this is a down-right Falshood, &c.* but that is discours'd elsewhere.

Well, but we have, you say, some things, which, tho they are not forbid, yet neither are they requir'd by the Scriptures, and therefore these might be let alone, especially since we do not read that the Apostles us'd any such things.

For the Weight of this Objection, I need only refer to what I say elsewhere. The Doctor answers by retorting it upon us, that we have likewise some things of the same nature, as *Pulpits*. I remember, the Doctor in his other Letter, produces a learn'd Argument for reading of Sermons, out of *Jeremy* 36. 4, 5, 6. That *Baruch* wrote from the Mouth of *Jeremiah* all the Words of the Lord.

I think verily I may with more reason, alledge in this Case, *Neh. 8. 3. And Ezra the Scribe stood upon a Pulpit of Wood, which they had made for the purpose.* But I insist not on it, for this comes within those Circumstances, which are in order to the Execution of God's Commands. Our joining in Publick Worship is commanded; in order to this, 'tis necessary that he that officiates should be heard; and for this end, as well as others, 'tis necessary that he should stand higher than the People. But in order to the Execution of which Command is the Cross in Baptism, the Surplice, &c. We think we can see a vast Difference in these things; if the Doctor will not, we can't help it: But only query, whether he be not led by *Fancy, Humour, Perverseness* and such like Motives, which, from his own Experience, he very readily charges us with.

He asks, *Why it should be less pure to pray or preach in a Surplice, than in a Pulpit.* I answer, The one is convenient and useful, in order to the Execution of a Divine Command, and the other not; but is only grounded upon a Pretence of Decency, when there is no Decency in it.

Object. 11. Is about agreeing with the Papists; of which in my other Letter.

Object. 12. Another great Pretence for your Separation, is that of better edifying: But this is no more than a meer Pretence; for the word *Edifying*, do's denote in plain English, the same as building up, and is made use of, on account of the Church of Christ being frequently compar'd in the Scriptures to a Building or House. Now this Building or Church

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of Christ, being but one, therefore, to be Edify'd, must denote
in the strictest and true Sense, being made a Part of that one
Building, or a Member of that one Church. And therefore
'tis impossible that any Teacher should edify you, who pro-
motes a Separation, just as 'tis impossible to build up a
House by taking the Stones, and other Materials thereof
and putting them into different Parcels, instead of uniting
or putting them together, whereby alone they can be built
into an House.

I answer, 1. The Doctor takes that for granted, which
my Charity will not suffer me readily to grant him
viz. That 'tis impossible that Christians, who from their
differing Sentiments separate from one another, should
both be in the one Catholick Church. My Charity will
not suffer me to entertain such black Thoughts of the
Case of all Conformists, as this Principle would (if al-
low'd) constrain me to.

'Tis to me no hard thing to imagine, that Men of
different Communions, may yet both agree in the Faith
which is necessary in order to their being united to Christ,
by virtue of which Union to him, as their Head, the
whole Church is one. And nothing tends to beget more
unworthy Thoughts of God, than to represent him, as
oblig'd to reject and damn all those in this Nation, who
separate from the Church of England, meerly from a fear
of displeasing him, while at the same time they believe
all the Doctrines, and obey all the Rules of the Gospel.
I can't suffer such a disparaging Thought of God, and
his Goodness, once to enter into my Mind: But I con-
clude, that as in every Nation, so in every Party of Chris-
tians, he that fears God, and worketh Righteousness, is
accepted of him.

And while the Doctor is so free in his Discourse
of this nature, he seems to me to be liable to a just Appli-
cation of that Scripture, which he unjustly in another
place applies to us, *Psal 50. 21. Thou thoughtest I was as
together such an one as thy self*; that is, he seems to think
God has no more Clemency and Mercy than himself. I
have sometimes wonder'd, how Men of the Doctor's
High Principles, can make their Notions consist, I mean
the more favourable Opinions they entertain generally of
the Papists, while they own theirs a true Church, and
hold, that a Man may be sav'd in it, and yet deny Salva-

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tion to the poor Dissenters. And yet, if I mistake not, the Separation ought to be as wide between the Church of *Rome* and them, as between them and us : But let the Doctor think as he pleases, while we can approve ourselves to God, we neither value nor fear Man's Judgment.

We are well satisfy'd we belong to that Church of which Christ is the Head, and are not mov'd by the narrowness of such as measure the Unity or Extent of Christ's Church by a pitiful Uniformity in Humane Ordinances.

And let the Doctor look to it, that he be not mistaken, least if he be, he should meet with the same measure in Judgment wherewith he now Judges us ; and when Dissenters come to be acquitted, he should be judg'd out of his own Mouth, and according to his own unmerciful Principle.

2. We utterly disown the Charge and Guilt of the Separation, and say, it wholly belongs to the Conformists, who either laid a design of forcing us to Separate, (as appears by the Speeches of some, and the Practices of others in 1662.) or, who fell in with those that had such a Design. They have all either assum'd or submitted to such a Power as Christ has not left in his Church, and do insist upon such Terms of Communion, as *they* own are unnecessary, an-das they know, *we* think unlawful.

3. As to the Doctor's Notion of Edifying, we know very well that it signifies building up, and do add farther, that 'tis us'd Metaphorically for improving Persons in Knowledge, Faith, Holiness, &c. And as the Church is one Spiritual House, so is every true Christian a Temple of the Holy Ghost, and therefore the Scripture speaks of Edifying particular Christians, such as were already actually *made parts of that one Spiritual House, or Members of that one Church* ; to which purpose are these places of Scripture, *Rom. 14. 19. & 15. 2. 1 Corin. 8. 1. & 14. 4, 17. 1 Thess. 5. 11. Ephes. 4. 29.*

Nay, this word is us'd so generally for Instructing and Teaching, that 'tis once us'd when it can have no possible Relation to the Unity of the Church at all, it being us'd in a bad Sense, *1 Cor. 8. 10.* Shall not the Conscience of him that is weak be emboldned (in the Greek 'tis *Edify'd*) to eat those things that are offer'd to Idols ? In short, ac-

according to the general Sense of this word in the Scripture, a Man is Edified when he improves in Spiritual Knowledge in Faith, Love to God and Men, &c. And this being the greatest thing a Christian has to look after, he is bound to use those means he finds most conducive thereunto; and to dissuade him from this, is to put him upon doing the worst wrong to his own Soul: And a serious Christian will be able to discern whether the means he uses, Edifie him or no.

It will not signifie much to Dispute whether the Establish'd Worship, or that of the Dissenters is most Edifying; No doubt the Doctor thinks so of the Establish'd, as I do of the Dissenters Worship; and after all, *this* must be left to the Judgment of particular Christians.

I will only add, with Reference to what he says afterwards of the Devil's Delusions, that he that finds himself to become more acquainted with the Will of God, more inflam'd with Love to God, and more quickned to a zealous Care and Endeavour to obey God in all things, &c. by the Ministry he sits under on either side, may be assur'd that the Devil has no hand in this, but that that Ministry is truly edifying to him, by the Blessing of God upon it.

Obj. 13. *You can't but think your Teacher to be a true Minister of Christ, because he is a good Liver, and preaches the Truths of the Gospel.* There are more things than one or two that must evidence a Man a Minister of Christ. That these are two Necessary Qualifications, we are sure from *Tit. 1. 6, 9.*

I have in my other Letter consider'd the validity of the Mission of the Dissenting Ministers; and if that stand good, and they appear to have these and such like Qualifications, it will not be in the power of the Doctor to disannul their Ministry.

But, says the Doctor: *Then every good Liver is a true Minister of Christ,* (but he knows that is not made an Evidence alone) and consequently you your self must be a true Minister in the same sense your Teacher is; Namely, as a good Liver signifies a good Moral Man, (*viz.* a good Moral Man, that believes in Christ, that loves God, and keeps his Commandments) but if by a good Liver be meant a good Christian, then neither you nor your Teacher can be allow'd to be such, forasmuch

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as you wilfully and industriously abet and promote what is most strictly forbidden by Christianity, I mean Division in the Church.

We stand not to the Doctor's Allowances; what has he to do to Judge another's Servants, who stand or fall to their own Master? But the Doctor is like sooner, by his discovery of his want of Charity, (the very Breath and Soul of Christianity, and vastly more essential to it than Obedience to Humane Ceremonies) to blast the Reputation of his own than of our Christianity. But farther, where is the wilfulness we are charg'd with, who profess, that 'tis out of a sense of Duty to God that we do as we do? I should think the Doctor do's rather wilfully and industriously abet and promote Division, while he professedly pleads against those things that might end it: And therefore let him think seriously of that Text, Rom. 2. 1. *Therefore thou art inexcusable, O Man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for where- in thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self; for thou that judgest, dost the same things.*

As to the other Particular, *Preaching the Truths of the Gospel*, he says, *The Dissenting Teachers preach up some, and reach down other Truths, and encourage Division*, (but enough of that already) and that *this is the common way of Cheats, to put off their bad Wares, by putting some good among them.* And this is an Insinuation with which the Reputation of any Minister whatever may be blasted. There is no tolerable plea the Doctor has for this his base Suggestion: We hope we will take our Word, that our only Motive is a Fear of God, and a desire to keep his Commandments; The Doctor expects his Neighbour should take his word in the like Case, and we demand the same Pag. I.

of him: As to his long Harangue that follows, it has nothing of Argument in it; let but the Reader put in the Conformist instead of the Dissenting Teachers, and suppose the Charge to be brought against them for the Separation, and he will see it will serve us as well as him.

Obj. 14. Is taken from the bad Lives of some of our Ministers, as if they were for that Reason not the Ministers of Christ; the weakness of which Objection I might shew at large, by proving, that a Man may be a very bad Man, and yet a true Minister, particularly from the instance of Judas; as also by retor-

ting the Objection on your own Party; forasmuch as there are to be found among your Teachers, as bad Livers as among our Ministers.

To which I Answer; 1. That 'tis very true, that a bad Man may not discover himself by his Actions what he is, and so long Charity obliges me to judge well of him: And so he, who has all other Qualifications but that of true Holiness, so long as he do's not discover himself by his Actions to be wicked, is to be judg'd in Charity a Minister of Christ: But when he shews himself to be wicked, he is no longer to be acknowledg'd a good Man, and much less a Minister of Christ; and it is so far from being a Duty, that 'tis errant Folly to commit the Care of my Soul to him, who plainly Evidences that he takes no Care at all of his own.

2. The case is widely different between the Dissenting-Congregations and the Parish-Churches; forasmuch as any dissenting Congregation may at Pleasure free themselves from any wicked Minister, whereas it is quite otherwise in the Parish-Churches: And therefore sober Men of the Establish'd Communion have complain'd of it.

3. I own this is only an Objection in such places where the Ministers are bad Livers, but 'tis a good one if true, let them be on which side they will: The People are oblig'd to separate from such. But as I delight not in Reproaches, I shall only add, that a bad Life is a more clear Evidence of a false Prophet, than what he talks of in the foregoing Page; I mean a Separation on the account of those things in Dispute.

pag 36.

Obj. 15. You are (tho not in Communion, yet) in Charity with us: And as a Token of such your Charity, you do not scruple now and then (as occasion requires) to come to our Publick Service. Neighbour, as to this Practice of your Party, commonly call'd Occasional Conformity, it is so far from justifying your Separation, or lessening your Crime therein, that on the contrary, it renders it most inexcusable; For by such Occasional Conformity you plainly own, that there is nothing in our Publick Service, but what you can joyn with us in, if you will, and therefore your not coming to our Publick Service constantly, must proceed from no better Motive than Wilfulness or Obstinacy, at least, not out of a Conscientious fear of sinning thereby.

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To which I answer, 1. That if the Doctor's uncharitable Principle were true, that in all Church-Divisions on one side or other, Persons must be no Christians, his Argument would be good. But this is a Principle which he knows we deny, and which is indeed wide from the Truth: Tho we think the Blame of our Divisions lies entirely on the Conformists side, yet we dare not judge after this rate of our Brethren. And whatever the Doctor may think of our Charity herein, we doubt not but sober Men, who think freely, will own it a Ver-
tue.

2. These Occasional Conformists do look upon themselves bound in Conscience to have their stated Communion with the Dissenting Ministers, notwithstanding their Charity. They think it very evident, that they have all the necessary Qualifications of the Ministers of Christ. And that they were very unjustly thrown out of their Places in 1662. and that when those Terms were impos'd, all Ministers ought to have refus'd them, and consequently that the Dissenting Ministers are the most right-ful Pastors of the Church, to which all the Christians of this Nation are bound statedly to join themselves: And if Ministers and People had both acted thus, as they ought to have done, there had been no Separation at all: But then,

3. They think, that tho this be the true State of the Case, they are not bound to condemn or unchristian all those who think otherwise. They believe that sincere Christians, and true Ministers of Christ, might be of different Opinions, and therefore they do not see why they may not esteem them as Christians, and hold Communion with them as such upon occasion, tho in these Extra-essential things they judge them in the wrong, and think they are bound to a fixed ordinary Communion with the other side; and with all they say,

4. That they do not herein do any thing which they apprehend sinful according to the Scriptures, or that can be reasonably concluded such from their professed Principles.

5. There are many things in the National Establishment, which have been generally confess'd by themselves to be amiss, and to need a Reformation. And such a Reformation was long call'd for by the Puritans,
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while they continu'd in the Church, and by the Dissenters since: But nothing of this nature can be obtain'd, but such Motions have been always rejected, and are professedly by many oppos'd; and therefore the Dissenters can't but look on themselves as bound to attempt that Reformation among themselves, which they can't expect in the Constitution.

6. 'Tis very possible, a Man may think it lawful to join in some Parts of Establish'd Worship, and unlawful to join in others; he may think it lawful to take the Sacrament Kneeling, and yet unlawful to have his Child baptiz'd with the Sign of the Cross. And yet I suppose all will grant, that a Man's fix'd Communion should be where he judges he can without Sin have the free Use of both Sacraments. So that a Man's occasional Conformity in one Particular, can't reasonably be interpreted, as owning that *there is nothing in the Publick Service, but what he can join in, if he will.*

7. There is no Obligation that lies upon them to such a constant Communion as is urg'd by the Doctor. If Acts of Parliament did now (as they do not) require this of us, what Evidence can be given, that God has lodg'd Ecclesiastical Government in a Magistrate? No such thing can be infer'd from the New Testament, or from the Original Contract, the Foundation of all Civil Power. If the Power of a Convocation, to make Laws for a National Church, be urg'd, What Evidence is there, that Christ (who instituted no such kind of Church) ever appointed any such governing Power? What Evidence, that all Christian Churches, who have a Power left them within themselves, are oblig'd to submit to the Decrees of such an unequal Representation? Or in fine, if the Command of the Bishop in whose Diocese I live, be urg'd, what Evidence can be given of my Obligation to acknowledge him for my Pastor or Bishop, whom the Prince shall appoint? Or what good Reason can there be, that I should look upon him as the Person whom I am to obey and submit to, as set over me by God to watch for my Soul, to whom I am a perfect Stranger, and like always, it may be, so to remain.

These things ought to be clear'd, and the Authority that obliges Persons to be of the Establish'd Communion, be made out by good Scripture Evidence, which I am satisfy'd

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satisfy'd the Doctor has not yet done. It may perhaps be said, that by their own Practice, and by an Occasional Submission, these Persons do acknowledge the Authority that enjoins the Establish'd Worship, and therefore are bound to a constant joining with it. But the Answer to that is easy, for their Practice shews plainly, that they do not acknowledge any such Authority as is pretended, and their stated Dissent is an avowing the contrary. By their Occasional Communion therefore, they do testify their Charity in an Action which they do judge lawful; and by their more ordinary and fixed Communion with the Dissenters, they do protest against the imposing Power, which is so very pernicious and prejudicial to the Christian Religion in this Nation.

Next the Doctor proceeds to the other part of the Objection, of Dissenters *being in Charity*, tho not in constant Communion with the Conformists. And this he endeavours to answer, and the old Story of Obedience to Bishops Returns, which need not be again consider'd.

The Doctor will do well to answer another Objection; and that is, that he himself is not in Charity with the Dissenters. But he adds, *I must earnestly beg you, to allow your self due time for an impartial Examination of your own Heart, whether you may not possibly deceive your self, whilst you think you are in Charity with us.* This is not a very hard Question to determine. A Man may know whether he believes those that differ from him are good Christians, and whether he do's truly love all such. The Doctor openly professes that he has no such Charity as this for us: But I can assure him, that 'tis very possible for a Dissenter to be of this Disposition toward Church-men; and I make no doubt, but many Church-men (of a better Spirit than the Doctor) are of the same Disposition towards us.

He adds, *that there is too much Ground to suppose that you may possibly be thus deceiv'd, you your self must acknowledge, if you are not altogether ignorant, what manner of Charity your Presbyterian Brethren, in the Late great Rebellion between 1640. and 1660. shew'd to the Episcopal Party in this Kingdom.*

In answer to which, it ought to be consider'd, what was the Behaviour of the Episcopal Party before 1640.

'Tis notorious with what a high hand they carry'd it toward us, they persecuted us with an implacable Malice, and were endeavouring to bring this Nation under the vilest Slavery, both Civil and Religious. And when the Nation became sensible of their Danger, and began to contend for the Civil Rights, it can't be wonder'd at, that those who were unjustly oppress'd, should take part with those who oppos'd the Oppressors. What was it they suffer'd from the Presbyterians, in comparison of what they suffer'd from them between 1662. and 1688? Were they incapable of Livings meerly for their being Episcopal? Or were there any Hardships put upon them, like those of the *Oxford* 5 Mile Act? Had the Dissenters been only depriv'd of their Livings in 1662. Had they not been depriv'd of the most sacred Rights of Subjects, and been continually harass'd, fin'd, imprison'd, and restrain'd upon, and that very much at the Insigation of the Clergy; had they not endur'd such a Series of bitter Reproaches and Calumnies, built on many notorious Forgeries, the Doctor might with some Face have mention'd these former Times. But since the Episcopal Party have so abundantly repaid them to the utmost, whatever Hardships they can pretend to have suffer'd at their Hands, in Modesty, he ought to have omitted this; *Not to mention the extraordinary Charity shewn, at this very present, by your Brethren to the Episcopal Party, in a Kingdom not remote.* To which I answer, that this Reflection is more unreasonable than the former, in as much as the Barbarities us'd towards the Presbyterians in that Kingdom, did vastly exceed those which were suffer'd by their Brethren in *England*. The Thumkins, Boot, and open Murders, without so much as a Form of Justice, practis'd in that Nation, strike a Man at the very thought of them with Horrour: And what is it that the Episcopal Party suffer there, who are not depriv'd of Liberty of Conscience? 'Tis too plain, that a Jacobite Design is at the Bottom of that Noise and Clamour which has lately been made in this Nation about *Scotland*; but as the B—p of S—m has clear'd this Matter in his speech in the House of Lords, I shall content my self with setting down his Account of the Matter, taking it out of the Annals of *Queen Ann's* Reign, for the Year, 1705. p. 206. He said,

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"That as to the *Scotch* Affairs, he was particularly acquainted with them, and therefore would venture to speak with the more Assurance : That the *Scotch* Kirks being Establish'd without a Toleration, was an unfair Allegation ; for there needed no Law for Toleration, where there was no Law to Inhibit. The Episcoparians were not forbid to Worship God their own way, being only excluded from Livings ; and that there were at that time fourteen Episcopal Meeting-Houses in *Edinburgh* as open as the Churches, and as freely resorted to ; in several of which the *English* Liturgy was us'd ; but, that in several of them the Queen was not pray'd for. And the Bill for giving Patrons liberty of conferring their Benefices on Clerks Episcopally Ordain'd, had pass'd (at least the King had allow'd it) if they would have put in a Clause to oblige them to take the Oath to the Government, but upon the offering that Clause, the Person that solicited it, let it drop.

Obj. 16. *You mean well, and would fain do the best :* He Answers ; *Any Papist, or any other misguided Person will say the same ;* And may not I say the same to any Churchman that pretends to this, as I suppose they do : And if the Dr. thinks this is our last Refuge, and that we are forc'd to see to this when all our other Arguments are answer'd, he is much mistaken ; We need no such shift as this, nor is this any Objection of our making, but a fancy of the Doctor's, which he thought would serve handsomely to bring up the Rear of his vain Triumph. Where Men make such a Profession (as all honest Men must be suppos'd to do it on both sides) and do not plainly contradict it, they are to be believ'd, and that should cause contending Parties to have more Charity than what the Doctor expresses in the next words, viz. *And you must remember, that tho' God will undoubtedly make Allowances for Uprightness of Intention, where use has been made of all due means prescrib'd by God for understanding the Truth, yet this can't be look'd upon to be your Case, who refuse to make use of the Ordinary Means appointed by God for your Instruction ; because you refuse to be guided by your Parish Minister, whom God has appointed to guide you in all Points of Difficulty.*

But, 1. How do's it appear that God has appointed the Parish-Minister to be my Guide ?

2. Who

2. Who is to be Judge, which are Points of Difficulty? Must I take the Parish-Minister's word for that as well as for the Resolution? What can the Papists desire more?

Suppose a Man should have recourse to the Doctor, (as his Parish Minister) or to his Writings, which the Doctor thinks better, and consults him upon the Point of Conformity, and having consider'd his Reasons, finds them weak and trifling, must he be guided by him, in spite of his own Judgment, that he is in the wrong?

The Doctor mistakes, when he goes about to perswade the Dissenters to an implicit Faith, and blind Obedience: they are very much dispos'd to see with their own Eyes, and to believe no Doctrine any farther than they see the Proof of it, and to own no Authority without some good Reason to convince them of the Rightfulness of it. And as to the sincerity of our Intentions, we warn the Doctor that he would leave that to God to judge of; 'tis a nice Point, and requires a more discerning, calm, and impartial Judgment to search into it than the Doctor is Master of: Let him remember that he is a fallible Creature, liable to mistake in Judging, and therefore let him beware of rashly judging the Secrets of Men, and their Eternal States. For tho an unrighteous Judgment makes no Alteration in the Case of those, who are judg'd, yet the Consequence of it (being so desperately Mischievous to the Persons themselves, who take upon them to judge and condemn their Neighbours) should be more awfully thought of by the Doctor than it seems to be.

God forbid I should judge any Man, who professes to believe, and do all that is requir'd in order to Salvation, and do's not contradict his Profession by a wicked Life. Such a Man, let him be Presbyterian, Independant, Episcopal, or Anabaptist, shall be sincerely Lov'd and Honour'd by me, and with all such I always Profess a readiness to hold Communion, so it may be done with the Omission of doubtful Disputations.

I have now gone over his Objections, except those that are peculiar to himself, and of them, and his Conclusion, I shall not need to speak, because they do not at all affect the Cause of the Dissenters.

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I shall only take a view of his Postscript, where there is no want of Malice and bitter Zeal, but the Doctor is so kind as to qualify it with an Antidote, that will prevent our receiving any hurt by it, I mean the superabundant Silliness and Weakness of it.

1. Then he gives us a Specimen of the Disagreement between the Dissenters Principles and Practices.

I have spoken to the two first of his Instances in my other Letter; His 3d Instance is, That it is the Dissenters Principle, that *kneeling at the Sacrament is not to be allow'd of, as being Popish and Superstitious*; and for their Practice he tells us, *that the Dissenters do, notwithstanding, kneel at the Sacrament, in order to qualify themselves for Places or Offices*: Than which nothing can be more Ridiculous. How easie were it to retort this on the Church-men, by comparing one Church-man with another, or the same Men with themselves; namely, their Principles about Obedience to the Prince, and their Practice directly opposite to it.

But I ask whether this Learned Doctor do's not know that the Dissenters are not all of one Mind in this Matter? Or, do's he know that the same Men hold that Principle, and yet act in a direct Opposition to it? He knows, all those that receive the Sacrament kneeling, do say, they do not judge it unlawful so to do; and the other sort of Dissenters, who think kneeling at the Sacrament Unlawful, are such as never Communicate with the Church. The Gentlemen in the House of Commons, who contended so earnestly for the Occasional Bill, yet took notice of this; and it might seem strange the Doctor should over-look it, were it not that he shews himself resolv'd to venture at any thing, so he may but reproach and vilifie the Dissenters.

In his 4th Instance, he sets down this as our Principle, *It is Superstitious and Popish to adorn churches, or make them Fine and Beautiful*: And our Practice he represents, that *several Meeting-Houses of the Dissenters, of late Years Erected, are, notwithstanding, built much more Stately and Fine, than most of our Parish-Churches*. I am a perfect Stranger to this Principle of the Dissenters, which the Doctor talks of, as may be seen by a Passage in my former Letter wrote before I read this. The Dissenters do indeed judge it unlawful to adorn places of Worship with Pictures and Crucifixes; and I suppose the Doctor can't charge them with any thing like this: But as to the height of the Building, it is certainly

a very great Convenience and Advantage to the People who meet in it, upon more accounts than one: And I know none who think that 'tis Superstitious or Popish to have the place of Worship Decent and Handsome, tho they judge, that where the Circumstances of a People will not reach to what is desirable, they may nevertheless acceptably Worship God. And herein the Conformists must be suppos'd to agree with them: For as they have their Stately Cathedrals, so they have some Parish-Churches which are sufficiently Mean, and which being only Thatch'd, might in Reason check the Humour of some People, that despise the Dissenters Worship upon that account. But if this be the Principle of any Dissenters, I will freely disown it, and declare, I am so far from it, that I wish the Dissenters had as Fine and Beautiful Places of Worship in every Town in England, as those the Doctor speaks of, which have been Erected of late Years.

His other Instance I have spoken of before.

2. Next he gives us a Specimen of *the Agreement between some Principles and Practices of the Dissenters and Papists.*

1. *The Papists make it their business to seduce and draw off the People from the Communion of the Church of England. The Dissenters make it their business to do the very same.*

This is admirably Profound! The Papists would draw Men one way, and the Dissenters would draw them quite the contrary, and therefore there must be a marvellous Consent and Agreement between them: All Parties think themselves in the Right; and like to have others of their Mind. But I would ask the Doctor whether he do's not think, that the Papists are as willing to seduce Persons from the Communion of the Dissenters, and whether there be not therefore as perfect an Agreement in this Matter between them and the Church of England? And how easily could I run the Parallel as far as the Doctor has done, if Fond of writing such silly Postscripts. The Papists and the Church-men agree in seducing Men, and drawing them from the Dissenters to Diocesan Episcopacy, to Forms of Prayer, to bowing toward the Altar, and at the name of Jesus, to kneeling at the Sacrament, and the use of the Cross in Baptism; and the Papists use some of the same Methods with the Doctor; Urge an implicit Faith in Church-Guides, endeavour to fright People into their Commu-

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ion, by impudently damming all those that separate from them, &c.

His 2d, 3d and 4th Instances I have already consider'd.

5. *The Papists pretend to Miracles, and Extraordinary Gifts, and that their chief Guide, the Pope, is inspir'd, or more immediately assisted and directed by the Spirit. The Dissenters likewise pretend, that their Teachers are more spiritually Gifted than our Episcopal Clergy, and that their Guides are (many, if not all of them) inspir'd, or more immediately assisted and directed by the Spirit.*

Poor trifling ! The Papists pretend to Miracles and extraordinary Gifts ; Do the Dissenters pretend to any such thing ? What are the Miracles they boast of ? Do's the Doctor think the Assistance of God's Spirit a thing extraordinary in the Christian Church ? Is it not what every sincere Christian certainly has ? Is it not sure, that if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of Christ's ? *Rom. 8. 9.* The Dissenters do indeed Pray for the Assistance of the Spirit, and hope they enjoy a Measure of it, according to the Assurance which Christ has given us, *That our Heavenly Father will give his Holy Spirit to those that ask him, Luke 11. 13.* And they have the Charity to think this is not peculiar to themselves. The Papists indeed do pretend that the Pope is inspir'd, or more immediately assisted and directed by the Spirit : But do they not pretend that he is render'd hereby infallible ? Did they only pretend to his being immediately assisted as other Christians are, (who may notwithstanding err) who would deny it, supposing he appear'd to be a good Christian ? But why do's the Doctor say the Dissenters pretend their Guides are inspir'd ? Is that a word which they ever apply to themselves ? Or do they pretend to that Infallibility which Inspiration (in the common Sense of the Word) do's carry along with it ? Do they pretend to impose any thing they say upon the People on this score ? Do they not openly declare and avow to their Hearers, that they are no farther to be believ'd, than as what they say is contain'd in the Scripture, or by just Consequence deduc'd from it ? If Inspiration be taken only in a Lax Sense, for the Assistance of the Spirit, the Dissenters know that the Church-men pretend to it as well as themselves. I would fain else understand the 13th Article ; ✠ Works done before the Grace of Christ, and
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“ the Inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasant to God
Or the Collect for the 5th Sunday after *Easter* ; “
“ Lord, from whom all good things do come, grant
“ us, thy humble Servants, that by thy holy Inspira-
“ tion we may think those things that be good, &c.

Or if the Doctor pretends to nothing of this, I would
fain know how he could answer the Question propounded
to him when he was made a Deacon ? When the Bishop
ask'd him, Do you trust that you are inwardly mov'd by
the Holy Ghost, to take upon you this Office ? how could
he answer, *I trust so* ? I know no Dissenters that carry
the Matter higher than this. It follows,

*Whence arises N. B. one remarkable Difference between
the Dissenters and Papists. The Papists acknowledge but one
(viz. the chief) of their Spiritual Guides to be inspir'd,
or more immediately assisted and directed by the Spirit, and
him they call the Pope. The Dissenters pretend that many
(if not all) of their Spiritual Guides are inspir'd, or more
immediately assisted and directed by the Spirit, and so have
among them many Popes.*

Do's the Doctor believe what he says to be true ? If he
do's, he ought to understand our Opinion better, before he
writes against us, and not rashly charge us with what we
positively deny, in the same Sense that the Church-men
do. For I doubt not, but they will own, that notwith-
standing God gives his Spirit to Christians in general,
yet there are some special Promises of Christ's Presence
made to Ministers, upon which they may depend, not on-
ly in that Work which is common to them and other
Christians, but in that which is peculiarly theirs, I mean
the Discharge of the Ministerial Function. And therefore
it is too plain, the Doctor has here taken part with the
great Accuser.

I can't but commend to the Doctor this Caution, as a
Friend, that he would beware of bantering about the
Work of the Spirit : 'Tis too serious a Matter to be thus
ridicul'd : And I am fully perswaded, that the Neglect
of this Caution will never be of Service to his Cause.
For they who know how necessary the Assistance of the
Spirit is, and make this the matter of their earnest and
daily Prayer to God, will be very apt to suspect (in
spite of all his Arguments) that he that can turn the
Assistance of God's Spirit into a Banter, do's some way or
other quench the Spirit.

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Since it thus appears from the foregoing Specimen, that all the Adversaries of the Church of England promote the same common End, viz. Popery, and that by many the same common Artifices; it ought therefore to be duly consider'd, whether they may not all be very properly comprehended under the general Name of Papists; and so be sub-distinguish'd into Roman Catholick Papists on the one hand, and on the other hand, into fanatical Papists, otherwise call'd Dissenters.

I would fain know of the Doctor why he is offended with the Dissenters, when they accuse the Conformists as symbolizing with the Papists, and yet is so free to brand them as Papists? And what distinctive Point of Popery do they maintain? I cannot think of one thing, wherein the Conformists differ from the Papists, wherein the Dissenters do not differ from them also; and there are some things more, wherein they differ from them both. So that they must be reputed and nam'd Papists, not because they are less, but more opposite and contrary to the Papists than some of their Neighbours: So that to imitate the Doctor in his way of Discourse in other Places. The reason why we must be call'd *Papists*, is, because we are not *Papists*. And his

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Of his other Letter.

Addition of *Fanatical*, is as absurd and ridiculous as the other. We own not one Notion about the Influence of the Spirit, which we are not able to confirm by the Articles, Liturgy, &c. of the Church of England, as well as by the Scriptures.

As a Farewell, the Doctor tells us, That we are taking the right and most ready way to bring in Popery.

In answer to which, I say,

1. That we are very sensible that our Divisions are an Advantage to the Papists, who would otherwise never have been so zealous to divide us, or made use of such Tools to screw Matters to the utmost height in 1662. in order to the dividing of us. They knew for certain, that such Terms being impos'd, there must of necessity a Division ensue; and Popish Counsels were at the bottom of all the Severities us'd against us. And it will be to the perpetual Reproach of those that were concern'd in those Affairs in 1662. that they did (for ought appears) wilfully

wilfully and industriously cause a Division, which as one might see, could serve no other than a Popish Interest.

2. 'Tis too plain who are now most serviceable to the Popish Cause, even those who are united in Counsel with them, as the Jacobites and High Church-men actually are; and that in Opposition to the Dissenters and Moderate Church-men. And there is evidently more Danger from the Opposition of the High-Church against the Moderate Church-men, than from any Disagreement between them and the Dissenters: And it is the Union of these two that has kept out Popery, which had otherwise overflow'd this Nation.

3. 'Tis in the Power of the Church to end the Division (in a great measure at least) and so to remove the Danger that arises from it. Or it is rather in the Power of the Parliament to remove those things that keep the Breach wide open; but the loud Noise and empty Clamour of the High Part of the Clergy, hinder it. So that whatever the Advantage be which the Papists gain by our Divisions, it is wholly chargeable on the Conformist side. For,

4. We are not able on our side to end the Division. We are heartily sorry, not only that the Papists may reap Advantages hereby, but for many other Mischiefs that are owing to the same Cause. But we cannot part with our Consciences to keep out Popery; nor must we do Evil, that Good may come of it.

And thus, Sir, I have consider'd the Doctor's Arguments against us, which, I am well satisfy'd, are not like to do us half the Mischief, which from his own Uncharitableness (without Repentance) is like to accrue to himself. That God would therefore give him true Repentance, shall be sincerely my Prayer for him; and therein, I doubt not, your Religion and Inclination will engage you to join with,

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Yours, &c.

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